

FRA on International Holocaust Remembrance Day (27 January)

Today is the International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the universal commemoration day for the millions of innocent victims of the Shoah: Jews, Roma, homosexuals and others who were systematically murdered by the Nazis.

FRA Director Morten Kjaerum: “The Shoah is an immense human tragedy, the embodiment of evil in our time. The best tribute we can pay to the victims is to learn from it, to promote its remembrance and to educate the younger generations about the importance of respect for every human being.”

Anti-Semitism is an old and deeply rooted phenomenon in Europe. Unfortunately, anti-Semitism did not wither away with the defeat of Nazism, and regrettably anti-Semitism still haunts Europe today, despite efforts to eradicate it. More worryingly, in recent times, anti-Semitism, traditionally associated with the extreme right, has again become more widespread.

“The history of anti-Semitism and Holocaust shows the tragic consequences of a gradual and increasing denial of human rights. Advancing awareness on the Holocaust goes therefore hand in hand with raising awareness on fundamental rights. It is vital that young people learn from the Holocaust and are empowered to shape an inclusive society, based on respect for diversity and on the protection and promotion of fundamental rights. Political leaders, governments and society at large must remain determined in their stance against all forms of racist hatred”, said Morten Kjaerum.

The FRA has developed a number of research and educational activities to address anti-Semitism in Europe:

FRA has cooperated with Yad Vashem on a number of educational activities, such as meetings between pupils and Holocaust survivors, or a workshop for a network of educators on lessons from the Holocaust and its relevance for human rights education, to equip teachers with tools and techniques, and to encourage projects on Holocaust remembrance and human rights education.

The Agency also collects and analyses official and unofficial data on anti-Semitic incidents in the EU since 2004 and produces an annual update of its original comprehensive 2004 report. The latest available governmental and non-governmental statistical data covering 2001 to 2007 show an increase in anti-Semitic activity between 2001 and 2002, between 2003 and 2004 and again in 2006. The Agency has observed signs that the recent incursion into Gaza may yet again impact upon Jewish communities in the European Union.